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# The Art Gallery

EDOUARD JEAN-BAPTISTE DETAILLE.



AMONG eminent painters of battle-pieces, none is better known, or better represented by his pictures in this country, than Edouard Detaille. He was born in Paris in 1848, and, though one of the youngest of French artists, has already risen to a rank which entitles him to be classed among the first painters of this period. He received a good educa-

tion and took his degree of "Bachelier"—as all young Frenchmen are expected to do after they have followed the "cours" of a college—when he was seventeen. During the years he spent at the Lycée Bonaparte, he showed great natural aptitude for drawing, and many of his classmates treasure to-day sketches which he made during the long and tedious hours to which the Paris "collégiens" are subjected. As was natural for a boy living in so military a city as Paris, he principally drew soldiers. Meissonier, who knew his family, was much impressed by his abilities, and after the usual parental hesitation Detaille entered his studio soon after he left college. Two years later, in 1867, he exhibited his first picture in the Salon, representing a corner in his master's studio. This was soon followed by his first military picture—"Cuirassiers of the Imperial Guard Shoeing their Horses on the Road to Antibes," painted after he had travelled with Meissonier through the south of France. In 1868 he also exhibited at the Salon a "Halt of Drummers," which clearly indicated that he was destined to occupy an eminent position among painters.

His next exhibit, "A Rest during the Manœuvres at the Camp at Saint-Maur," contributed to his fame more than any of his other works. For this he obtained a medal, and another was awarded to him the following year for his painting of an "Engagement between Cossacks and French Chasseurs," an illustration of which is given on the opposite page. His picture of the "Rest" is now in the Stewart collection in this city. At this time he also painted several genre pictures, "The Interior of a Coffee-house," "Reading the Papers," "Exquisites in the Luxembourg Gardens," and "A Campaign Plan."

As soon as the Franco-Prussian war began he enlisted in the Fourth Corps d'Armée under General Pajal. He soon returned to Paris and joined the troops encamped at St. Maur. He probably little thought, when he was painting his "Rest during the Manœuvres at St. Maur," that he would himself encamp on the same ground as a soldier.

During most of the engagements he made rapid sketches, and, assisted by his astonishing memory, was afterwards able to reproduce with amazing accuracy the terrible episodes of those hard-fought skirmishes round Paris. At the end of 1870 he was appointed secretary to General Appert, and was thus enabled to follow still closer all the intricacies of the contest. His talent made itself useful to his countrymen at that time by enabling him to draw accurate maps of the environs of Paris showing the positions of the two armies.

He was present at the terrible battle fought on the banks of the Marne on December 2d, 1870, which was one of the most deadly encounters that took place during the siege of Paris. He afterwards painted an episode of that combat representing an entire rank of soldiers killed by a mitrailleuse. Never before had a painter attempted the realistic treatment of a spot literally covered with corpses. Some of the dead men still remain

standing up, and look as rigid as lay figures, while some of those that have fallen have dropped into singular attitudes far more realistic and natural than the corpses we generally find stretched out at full length in battle-pictures.

Detaille excels in fixing on canvas some of those effects which exist in nature but for a moment. For instance, in a painting of his lent by J. J. Astor to the first exhibition in aid of the Society of Decorative Art, we find the small clouds of blue smoke which arise from the guns of the soldiers floating so lightly in the atmosphere that we are naturally inclined to hold our breath not to blow them away. In this picture we see a detachment of French chasseurs defending an enclosure suggesting the outside of a farm against a party of Prussians. The action consists simply in the exchange of shots through loop-holes hastily made in the walls by



FIGURE FROM "A RECONNOITRING PARTY." BY DETAILLE. EXHIBITED IN THE SALON OF 1877.

knocking out a few bricks. The distance seen through these holes is very cleverly managed, and the attitudes of the defenders, with the dead and wounded about them, show an earnestness which tells a far more tragic story than the most bloody hand-to-hand combat ever painted.

In 1872 Detaille produced "Les Vainqueurs," a picture representing a party of Prussian soldiers moving out of a house in the suburbs of Paris, and a long line of Prussian transport wagons advancing slowly over the snow-covered ground. Through the gray winter atmosphere is seen a distant view of Paris, with the gilt dome of the Hôtel des Invalides and the towers of Saint Sulpice and Notre Dame. The soldiers accompanying the convoy are in undress uniform, some with helmets and others with foraging caps. Their long German

pipes hang on their chests, and their appearance is very suggestive of an army returning home after victory.

In 1873 he exhibited "In Retreat," and in 1874 a "Charge of the Ninth Cuirassiers in the Village of Morsbroom." In 1875 he produced an exceedingly clever painting representing a regiment of infantry marching down the boulevards in Paris near the Porte St. Denis, in a snow-storm. At the Salon of 1877 we find a "Reconnoitring Party" and "Saluting the Wounded," where the Commander-in-Chief of the French army salutes a convoy of wounded soldiers. Baron Gros treated a similar subject when he painted Napoleon I. doing the same thing and exclaiming, "Hail to unfortunate courage!" In Detaille's work, from which we give a sketch of one of the principal figures, we have a long, straight, muddy road, along which slowly advances the convoy. The French marshal has ridden out of the road into a field bordering it, and respectfully raises his képi, thereby seeming to imply more respect than by simply raising his hand to his head in military salute. Some of his staff imitate his example, but the escort can take no such liberty: they are in rank, and salute the wounded as they would some superior officer. The figure in our sketch is on a white horse and wears the light blue uniform of the chasseurs. It stands in the foreground and is in strong light, making a good contrast with the dark overcoats and uniforms of the rest of the staff of officers.

Another sketch is that of a French cavalry soldier who has just ridden up to headquarters to inform the commanding officer of the approach of the enemy. It is early dawn, and the "estafette" has ridden hard, as the whole figure indicates, even to the strap of his helmet hanging loose. The very natural way in which he points over his shoulder with his thumb adds greatly to the power of his narrative. He has already given the alarm in riding through the village, and the companies can be seen in the gray dawn mustering down the street. Of the three officers he is addressing, one is all ready to mount, the second is just buttoning the last button of his overcoat, and the third one, who is hurrying out of the door, has had time only to slip one arm in his sleeve.

In the last Loan Exhibition were two very good examples of Detaille—one a "Dragoon of the Time of the First Empire," lent by J. A. Raynor, the other an "Officer of Hussars during the Franco-Prussian War," lent by S. P. Avery. A noticeable fact in this painting is that the eyes of the officer, who is leisurely sitting in his saddle with a cigarette between his fingers, are light blue, the same color as his coat; by throwing down the shade of the peak of his military cap his eyes and forehead are in strong shadow, and the light blue eyes shine out with unexpected effect. His splendid painting "Champigny," of which we give a full-page illustration from a drawing of his own, was the only picture, we believe, he exhibited at the Salon this year. It has just been purchased for Judge Henry Hilton, who does not much trouble the New York picture importers, having his own buyer in Paris. This is doubtless the most important work by Detaille in this country. All the best characteristics of the artist appear in it. It is full of spirit and motion, and the grouping of the figures is masterly. How full of life they are, and how different from the dapper-looking soldier on parade, with their worn and crumpled uniforms standing boldly out from the wintry landscape! As the picture has not yet arrived in this country, extended criticism is reserved. The canvas is not a large one. Like his master, Meissonier, Detaille loves to comprise a good deal of story within a small compass. Meissonier created a sensation when he exhibited his "Bataille de Solferino," wherein, with his usual minuteness, he produced a battle-piece without exceeding the general size of the small figures it was his custom to paint. The large pictures of Horace Vernet, one of which occupies the entire wall of one of the large



rooms of the Palace of Versailles, seem to have gone out of fashion, leaving Detaille and the present school of French historical painters to produce pictures of smaller dimensions, wherein accuracy of detail and a conscientious study of military life have replaced the more theatrical rendering of their predecessors.

In conclusion, it may be said that Detaille's touch is free, yet precise, sometimes verging on hardness; but the "technique" of the art never seems to trouble him. His colors are true and clean, and he masters great difficulties of foreshortening and attitude with no apparent effort. It may be safely affirmed that few artists have achieved so much as Detaille has achieved at so early an age; and he has certainly the brightest prospects for the future.

FRÉDÉRIC VORS.

#### RECENT ART IMPORTATIONS.

THE importations of foreign art are arriving for the winter season, and never in the history of that commerce were they so choice and valuable.

It is not to be maintained that American taste keeps up entirely with European taste. The new reputations that are forming in Paris and London are not yet recognized in this country. With all its quick intelligence, the American public does not accurately follow the course of European intelligence. New men, like Bastien-Lepage, Henner, Laurens, Gustave Moreau, Vollon, and Delaunay, are scarcely introduced into this country. With the caution of the banker and investor, not with the enthusiasm of the cognoscento—with the prudence of the bank-scales and money-scoop, does the Yankee form his gallery, which he calls an "investment." A reputation must be ten years old in Paris before an American will touch it.

One novelty among the art "fashions" recently taken into favor does the American accept already—that is, the Dutch school. Cottier has taught us to whisper, with the accent of lively faith, the names of Mauve and Maris. By J. Maris we have just seen an exquisite example, in the collection of M. Lantier, on St. Mark's Place—a group of two horses, a white and a black, in an exquisitely quiet sunset effect. The picture is not precisely a new importation, but it would give an air of delicious novelty to some American collection of the usual conventionality.

Knoedler imports, for the chance of the autumn trade winds, two of these delicate, tender, well-bred, and

cool-looking Dutch effects—a pair by Mauve. One shows the shepherd driving forth his flock at dawn, the other the same man collecting it into the fold at twilight. The sunrise and evening effects are both

Other importations by Knoedler, all good in their way, we may describe in short-hand. The finest specimen of Corot is not yet on exhibition, but is understood to be a masterpiece—a dance of nymphs at dawn, exhibited

in the Salon the year of the artist's death. A smaller and very delightful Corot is called "Les Puits," and represents a well, with three peasant-women grouped around the curb, a square-looking cow in profile alongside, a pair of dark oaks in the foreground, and a view of village roofs on the distant bank in one of the master's mystical and ineffable horizons, all braided with silver and pearl. At the recent sale for the benefit of Mouchot, whose attack of insanity left a widow and interesting family in indigence, Mr. Roland Knoedler bought a "Mendicant Girl" by Bouguereau for five thousand francs. This sum of a thousand dollars formed Bouguereau's contribution to the benefit; certainly not a stingy one. The picture is a half-length, of a Gypsy type, a frail figure wrapped in a shawl, like Raphael's Zingara Madonna of the chair, and stretching out a well-drawn hand for assistance. A larger canvas by Bouguereau represents the favorite French "motif" of "La Grande Sœur," or sister big enough to dry-nurse the others. A classical-looking girl of sixteen, with her skirts pinned back into very elegant folds of drapery, hugs in her bare arms the bare legs of a noble boy with a head fit for a young Apollo: she is the care-taker now—in a few years he will be protecting his protector. By Carl Becker, in his rich decorative Makart-like style, is shown "The Return"—a stalwart well-dressed young swashbuckler of the seventeenth century coming back to his family. One of his children has buried himself in the enormous plumed

hat, another drags forward a great drum, the old father flourishes a römmer of hock, the wife nurses the little soldier who forages her white bosom. Even the serving-maid is interested, and a pleasing scene of

family joy enwreathes the carved table, whose tapestry cover is crossed by a delicate lace napkin.

By Hector Le Roux is a scene of the "Initiation of a Vestal." Before the altar of the Roman tutelary goddess the novice reads her catechism from a scroll in uncial letters, and the abbess and her chief priestess stand by in statuesque draperies and solemn attitudes. Le Roux's marble

and monumental women always look as though they never sat down. A little canvas by Schreyer is new, showing an Algerian chief on horseback, wrapped in his white haik. A Fromentin—from the dead



FIGURE FROM "SALUTING THE WOUNDED." BY DETAILLE. EXHIBITED IN THE SALON OF 1877.

treated with a preference for gray and silver rather than for gold and crimson. They are quiet, poetical, and distinguished.

Knoedler exhibits, for his pièce de résistance, the Salon



ENGAGEMENT BETWEEN FRENCH DRAGOONS AND RUSSIAN CUIRASSIERS, 1814.

picture of Berne-Bellecour for 1879, a duel scene, called "Sur le Terrain"—a representation of which from the artist's own pencil we shall present to our readers in our next issue, and until then we shall reserve our comments.